

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1899.

*TRAVELS IN NEW GUINEA.*

*Through New Guinea and the Cannibal Countries.* By H. Cayley Webster. Pp. xvii + 387. (London : T. Fisher Unwin, 1898.)

AFTER perusal of this book we are not able to say that its title is strictly descriptive of its contents. It is as regards New Guinea too comprehensive, and too vague in respect of "the Cannibal Countries." It deals with adventurous cruises on the New Guinea coast, and among the islands from the Admiralty Group to the Solomons, with a land journey undertaken in German New Guinea. Of this our author says :

"In the interior of German New Guinea I traversed a greater distance on foot than any white man has done before or since, and on that expedition I discovered the non-existence of a range of mountains previously marked on the chart."

The printing of the book is as excellent as is the paper. The illustrations, some three hundred and fifty in number, are generally good, sometimes excellent. It contains one map, the weakest part of the work. It takes no heed of latitude or longitude, makes Captain Webster more than half cross New Guinea, and sail recklessly over great islands. It is in every respect inferior to older maps. The style of the book is light and easy ; the spelling of German names inaccurate. Captain Webster is in some ways typical of the travelling Englishman, ready to go anywhere, but by preference where there is danger to be incurred, and with a mission to put right whatever he finds wrong. We meet him engaged in this way at Batavia, where we take up his narrative. On the German steamer were many coolie labourers. The Government agent kicked, bullied, and ill-used them till Captain Webster, who was only a passenger, interfered. But our author is also an enthusiastic collector. He writes :

"One of my earliest captures [in German New Guinea] was a magnificent specimen of the *Ornithoptera para-disea*, of which only one specimen had before reached Europe, and I felt that it was worth the whole of my journey to New Guinea to see this superb insect lying glistening in my hand."

On November 9, 1893, he reached the headquarters of the New Guinea Company, and received every kindness and assistance from the Governor. A day or two afterwards he saw a coolie flogged for having induced some others to run away. He thought the terrible punishment inflicted exceeded the offence. He found the natives true Papuans, but wisely abstains from describing a Papuan. Captain Webster noticed a strong Hebrew type running through their features, "as indeed I have seen throughout the whole of the country, both in British, German, and Dutch possessions." Surely he did not find this common from Hale Sound to Kiriwina.

He observes that they all smoke tobacco—apparently speaking of the natives of German New Guinea—"which has been introduced into the country by Europeans." He states that he has "on more than one occasion observed a mere infant remove the pipe from his mouth to refresh himself from the natural food provided by his

mother." This we presume is to be regarded as a figure of speech.

The introduction and distribution of the tobacco-plant is, however, of real scientific interest. Romilly ("The Western Pacific and New Guinea," p. 226) says of Astrolabe Bay, "Tobacco I should say there certainly was not." He would thus appear to agree with Captain Webster, who carried out his explorations in that district. But Giglioli (p. 120, "I Viaggio del Pattore," O. Beccari) quotes a letter from a Russian officer of the *Vitiaz*, from which Maclay landed in Astrolabe Bay in 1871, which says : "In quanto al tabacco essi [the natives] lo coltivano, e, lo fumano, rivoltandolo in una foglia di banana." On the other hand, we know from the British New Guinea Reports that seven or eight years ago it had not reached the low lands of the large rivers on the north-east coast of that colony.

Our author also relates that he has seen a Papuan woman "nourishing her child and a small pig at the same time, carrying one under each arm, appearing to be more anxious for the welfare of the latter, in consequence of its greater market value." We are aware that if a Papuan woman loses her child she sometimes employs a small pig to remove, and, it may be, to utilise the lacteal secretion. We have, however, never seen a Papuan woman carry her child under her arm, though they do carry dogs and pigs in that way. Captain Webster does not say where he saw this ; but at p. 29 we are told what he gave for a small boy. It was more than the market value of a young pig.

Captain Webster's only journey towards the interior was on the watershed of Astrolabe Bay. Romilly wrote :

"Astrolabe Bay has always been looked upon, for some reason unknown to me, as a suitable place for a party of adventurers to swoop down upon and take possession of."

The reason why travellers prefer it is that it offers apparent easy access to the interior. When our author wrote his book, he was evidently unacquainted with the German literature that deals with the Astrolabe Bay district.

The officers of the Russian corvette *Vitiaz* mapped it in 1871, and Guido Cora published the map in 1875. Maclay was in 1871 or 1872 as far inland as the top of the coast range (*Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms Land*, 1896), Zöller and Lauterbach will be mentioned later. The Governor furnished Captain Webster with military police and carriers, under the command of Pierson, who perished later with Herr Otto Ehlers in an unfortunate attempt to cross New Guinea from north to south. It has been claimed for Captain Webster by his publisher that he discovered the Minjim River ; he asserts himself that he followed its stream to its source, and he has a photograph of it which purports to say "Hier ist des Stromes Mutterhaus," though it does not look like it. Zöller ("Ersteigung des Finisterre-Gebirges," 1891) found that the road from two German plantations crossed the Minjim. It was, therefore, when Captain Webster arrived in the bay, well known to every one there except himself. Zöller forded the Minjim near the sea, and found it knee-deep in the dry season. In German writings it is sometimes termed a *Bach*, sometimes a *Fluss*. It was in flood when Captain Webster's

party started, but they forded it eleven times in that condition the first day, having, however, many narrow escapes. They left Stephansort on March 22, and reached their furthest distance on April 10. In giving no map of this journey Captain Webster is just neither to himself nor to his reader. Where he really got to, it is quite impossible to say. But this much is clear : that as the Minjim valley runs from the coast towards the Ramu nearly at right angles, and as our author did not reach the Ramu, and never left the watershed of the Minjim, his claim to have beaten the German record falls to the ground, and need not be further considered.

The second and most important geographical discovery of Captain Webster is of a decidedly negative character. He unhesitatingly asserts the non-existence of the great Bismarck Range, of which the German travellers are not a little proud, as it is the highest part of their colony, and on their map a note, "Zeitweise Schnee," appears at a spot where Captain Webster's map makes him cross the range.

The Bismarck Range was discovered and named by Dr. Otto Finsch ("Samoafahrten," 117). He estimated its altitude with wonderful accuracy at 14,000 to 16,000 feet ; its distance from the coast at seventy or eighty miles. It was seen by Romilly (*loc. cit.*, 227). Zöller says that in clear weather it is visible from Astrolabe Bay. In his "Routenskizze der Expedition in das Finisterre-Gebirge," Zöller gives the bearings from his highest point on that range to the different summits of the Bismarck Range. These, with bearings from Astrolabe Bay, must give the position with sufficient approximation to accuracy. In 1896, Drs. Lauterbach and Kersting examined the middle course of the Ramu, and actually ascended from thence some of the slopes of the Bismarck Range (*Nachrichten*, 1896, 42) to an altitude of 1000 metres. Lauterbach's positions were determined by astronomical observations, since published. Against this we have the statement of Captain Webster, that from his furthest point he "ascertained the true position of the Albert Victor Range of mountains in British New Guinea," which he thinks was mistaken by "some," who proudly named it after the late ex-Chancellor. In what manner our author ascertained in a few hours the true position of a mountain in British New Guinea from a single unknown and undetermined point on the Minjim will probably remain unknown for all time.

We entertain no doubt that Captain Webster, from his position on the watershed of Astrolabe Bay, was looking at the Bismarck Range itself in the distance. It should interest him greatly to peruse the reports on the splendidly conducted and completely successful expeditions of Zöller (1888) and Lauterbach (1896), and to study their maps, prepared and worked out on scientific principles. If our author will do that, he will wish to rewrite his preface.

In May 1894, Captain Webster visited New Britain just after a massacre of white men, and received the proverbial hospitality of Ralum. He gives an interesting account of how Mrs. Parkinson defeated a native attack, and relates how "the natives for many miles round worship the very ground she walks upon." This follows the very remarkable statement :—

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"Within a mile or two of Ralum one may find, even to-day, chiefs who keep slaves for the purpose of food, and who are in the habit of killing them every few days to satisfy their diabolical tastes."

Now there lives at Ralum the enlightened and philosophic Parkinson, a name known to, and deservedly held in high esteem by many of the best men in Europe and elsewhere. That the atrocities mentioned by Captain Webster should be in constant practice under the eye, so to speak, of Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson, it is not easy to comprehend. The attitude of the German authorities is not alluded to by our author. He visited the Sacred Heart Mission, which he pronounced to be "excellent." His historical account of the mission is not quite accurate. The missionaries did not, according to this story, leave Woodlark Island on account of its small size, or of fever, but because they could do nothing with the natives. He states that the country has been divided into Protestant and Catholic countries. We know, from a recent issue of the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, that these divisions are not observed by the Roman Catholic missions in other German colonies. Captain Webster does not say whether the boundaries are respected in New Britain, but he states that the mission is obliged by law to teach the children to read and write German.

He then visited the Solomon Islands, where, as usual, several murders had been committed. He points out that ships of war cannot deal with these matters, a fact that has long been well known to those who study the subject. Captain Webster says the Solomon Islanders are all cannibals, and that the practice of offering up human sacrifices on even the most trivial occasions prevails throughout the group. No information whatever is vouchsafed as to the nature of this strange sacrificial practice.

On page 136, Captain Webster says :—

"I have been an eye-witness to more than one such expedition (head-hunting raids) when a large haul had been made, and more than sixty trophies in the shape of heads had been captured, which were immediately smoke-dried and preserved by being plastered over with chinam."

It is much to be hoped that in the interests of social and political evolution Captain Webster may in the proper place lift the veil on his unique and gruesome experiences. He does not state where or when he assisted at these scenes, which must be very rare. We are not able to believe that "heads" can be preserved in the manner described by our author. The few we have seen had been carefully preserved by a different process, on rational and scientific principles.

Captain Webster brought his visit to the Solomons to a characteristic close by backing out in the presence of a hostile tribe with his face to the foe and his revolver in his hand.

The second part of his book shifts the scene to the Batavian archipelago. On the south-coast of Dutch New Guinea the author met Arab traders, and Christian missionaries who are making very little progress. At the Kei Islands he met his yacht, and was henceforth master of his own movements. He sailed for the nearest part of the New Guinea coast, provided with hunters, and the yacht armed with a quick-firing Krupp gun.

The party next reached British New Guinea. Our author found Port Moresby dreary and dried up. It has often been described as picturesque. He tells us the dress of the men consists "only of a small piece of cord round the waist." The dress does consist of a piece of small cord; but a respectable member of the community would be as much scandalised to appear in public dressed as described by Captain Webster as would be that gentleman himself. The philosophy of clothes offers in New Guinea a great field for the student, but it is not so near the surface as Captain Webster thinks. On the way to Samarai they saw

"numerous villages along the coast, and cocoa-nut trees in great profusion were observed high up on the mountains, but I was informed (says Captain Webster) that the natives were very treacherous and have a bad reputation."

As a matter of fact they are, according to the British New Guinea Reports, under the control of the village police all along the coast from Port Moresby to Samarai, and are settled communities. At Samarai he found "a judge from Queensland presiding there to try the numerous small native cases." It did not occur to Captain Webster that the Queensland judge would have no jurisdiction in another colony. He visited native villages in that district. He describes the weapons of the natives as "bows, arrows and spears." The bow and arrow is, however, not used east of Port Moresby. He visited Kwato, and pays a meed of praise to the mission there. He adds :

"At night could be heard far away in the forest weird sounds from their tom-toms and drums, wailings and shouting, which told us that their lewd dances and other disgusting orgies were taking place."

This is a *tour de force* of the imagination fit for the "Inferno" of the *Divina Commedia*. In sober fact there is no man within "tom-tom" range of Kwato that is not a church-goer. The great fault one really has to find with their dances is their dull, dreary monotony. The disgusting orgies are not scientific facts. John Knox said to his Queen :

"And of dancing, madam, I do not utterly damn it."

He was right. No wise Government will try to put down dancing, especially in a coloured population. Its suppression has been attempted more than once in the Pacific. In the code of M. Tardy Montravel it was enacted :

"<sup>13°</sup> Toute danse nocturne est interdite. Les delinquants seront punis d'un emprisonnement de un à trois jours."

Of this Paul Cordeil, chief of the Judicial Service of New Caledonia, writes :

"Les codes de M. de Montravel sont toujours restés lettre morte."

Let legislators and travellers take warning accordingly. Dancing is, next to eating, the greatest enjoyment the Papuan has. The drum is silent only after death or disaster. It is only unacquaintance with the drum and the dance that connects these with heinous sin. Assign-

ations are doubtless made at dances. They would be made in any case. It was in church that Petrarch fell in love with Laura, and Boccaccio with Fiametta.

Nothing noteworthy occurred after the party left Kwato till they met with the "duk-duk" in the German Islands. Captain Webster thinks it was invented in the Duke of York group as a form of native police. His view of it is far too narrow. Many natives came off to them on the coast of New Ireland. "They are all ferocious cannibals and very treacherous. Many had been to Fiji, to Samoa, and Queensland, but they are none the more to be trusted." They landed at New Hanover, assisted at some festivities, saw some pretty dances, and obtained photographs. Of course these dances were seen by Captain Webster, and were decent. Here he "found that the natives have a belief that every man, woman, and child belong to one or other species of birds, according to the lines of the hands." He connects this with the old palmistry of our forefathers. We recognise it as belonging to the totemism that exists or existed from the St. Lawrence to the west end of New Guinea, and probably much further. But we shall before long hear more on this subject from Captain Webster's distinguished host at Ralum.

The party then proceeded to the Admiralty Group, but did not dare to land there.

The last chapter is a summary of anthropology and ethnology. It requires to be regarded cautiously before it can be used for scientific purposes.

The collections made were large. In birds it was disappointing, at least as regards those of the Paradise family. The insects turned out better. The specimens collected are already to be met with in museums from the south of Italy to the north of Germany. Captain Webster has therefore the satisfaction of knowing that, as a collector, he has made a contribution to the sum of human knowledge.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*The Philosophy of Memory, and other Essays.* By D. T. Smith, M.D. Pp. 203. (Louisville, Ky.: J. P. Morton and Co., 1899.)

DR. D. T. SMITH is an amateur of philosophy in that wider sense of the word which includes physics, and his speculations, as they are modestly put forward in the present volume, range from psychology to sphere-formation, and from the distinction of organic and inorganic to an adverse criticism of the nebular hypothesis. The essay which gives its title to the book is an attempt, notwithstanding the sterility of the inorganic and the reproductive capacity of the organic, to trace continuity, and apply analogies, from the one to the other, in the form of a physical-vibration theory of ideation. Even conscience is an "orderly operation of ether vibrations with respect to conduct." The second essay, on emphasis or rhythm, is a further application of the wave-theory. The third paper, on "the functions of the fluid wedge," is interesting as suggested by the author's expert physiological studies, and carried out in the alien field of hydrostatics. The present writer confesses to non-comprehension. The fourth essay objects to the nebular hypothesis that the facts of rotation are against it. "The earth could revolve on its own separate axis in the same direction as the sun only by